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spondence between Weiss and Pertuisier in which there is much mention of Nodier, and various letters from Weiss and other friends to Nodier. The Nodier-Weiss and the Weiss-Pertuisier letters alone offer a literary interest. Weiss and Pertuisier exchange opinions on Nodier's first books. The letters of Nodier reinforce the testimony already in existence regarding his early and eager preoccupation with literature in general and romantic literature in particular.

And finally no student of the literary history of France can fail to realize, after reading Professor Pingaud's book, that the collections of provincial libraries and provincial archives present a most fertile field for research, and that provincial newspapers and the records and publications of provincial societies often contain biographical material of the highest importance.

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Rasmus Rask. I Hundreåret efter hans Hovedværk. Skildret av Otto Jespersen. [Folkets Førere]. Copenhagen and Christiania, 1918. Pp. 80.

In 1812 the Danish Scientific Society offered a prize the conditions of which were:

"With historical criticism to investigate and with suitable examples to show from what source the Old Scandinavian language may, with the greatest degree of certainty, be derived, to indicate the character of the language and the relation which it has occupied from earlier times and through the Middle Ages partly to the Northern partly to Germanic dialects, and also to determine exactly the principles, upon which derivation and comparison in these languages should be founded."

The recipient of the prize was Rasmus Rask, whose great "Pris-skrift" lay ready in 1818. On the centennial of its completion Professor Jespersen offers us a new study of Rask's life work. From childhood through youth we go with him upon his Asiatic journey, his return home, and his closing years. The final chapter is an appraisal of the scientific accomplishments of Rask. It is an exceedingly interesting story, well-told and impartial in its judgments, which it is a pleasure to me to call to the attention of the readers of this journal.

Rasmus Rask was born in 1787 in a peasant's home at Brændekilde, a Danish mile out from Odense in the Island of Fyen. His father was an unusually intelligent man, and better read than most in his station. Rask showed a burning thirst for knowledge as a child, which was combined with a burning need to impart his knowledge to others. Among his earliest friends was N. M. Peterson, literary historian and ON. student, to whom we owe much of the information we possess of Rask's earlier years. Rask's unusual aptness as a pupil, his quickness of comprehension and his acumen in dealing with linguistic facts was something which everywhere attracted the attention of his teachers. As a prize in the Odense Cathedral School he once received from the "Rektor" a copy of Snorre's *Heimskringla*. This became for a time his inseparable companion; without a grammar he entered upon the translation of it and he prepared from it an Icelandic accidence, which later became the basis for his *Veiledning til det islandske eller gamle nordiske sprog* (1811), a truly wonderful achievement for the time. He further took a Danish dictionary, attached to it alternating blank sheets, and on these supplied, as he gained mastery of the forms, the corresponding Icelandic words, which grew in the course of his reading into two ample octavo volumes. The articles under many of the words took the shape of veritable etymological discussions with comparisons from Swedish, Dutch, English, German, and Anglo-Saxon (Jespersen, pp. 6-7). Rask was at this time about 14-17 years old. He often studied till 1 or 2 o'clock at night, and was up to resume again at 5 or 6 in the morning. He grew intensely fond of Icelandic, which he for a time regarded as the parent of the other Scandinavian languages. Once he, with some other companions at school, formed a plan to emigrate to New Zealand to found there an ideal republic something like that of the poets Southey and Coleridge in England (p. 8); but for Rask, there was this difference in the plan that the language of the new ideal state was to be Icelandic. He had already begun the study of modern English and Old English (see above), which studies led in 1816 to his Anglo-Saxon grammar, a foundation work for later study of Old English. Jespersen notes the fact that he now also began busying himself with the languages of the Malay-Polynesian group.

At the age of twenty Rask matriculated at Copenhagen Uni-

versity. Here he lived in great poverty, having at no time but the very scantiest means; for days at a time, it seems, he had nothing to eat. Thus his health was seriously impaired and he never regained the strength he once had enjoyed. Through all the years of his great labors for science, in which he showed a capacity for work that was nothing less than marvellous, he was never strong and much of the time was sickly, though he for a long time seemed loth to admit it or pay any heed to it. The author points out how many of the grammars that he later published were prepared at this time in outline: Lappic, Portuguese, "Moeso-Gothic," Greek, Latin, Italian, French, German, Dutch, besides English, Anglo-Saxon, and Swedish. Of his interest in reforming the orthography of Danish, and of his continued chief interest in Icelandic, Jespersen speaks with considerable fulness pp. 11-16, and 50-54. Rask was struck by the richness and flexibility of Icelandic, "its purity and originality"; he calls attention to its prose literature, and its "glorious poetry," with its "splendid materials," and its "marvellous and noble style"; and he knows the old provincial laws, the runic monuments, and the heroic ballads. He was now extending his studies to include modern Icelandic, Feroese, Frisian and Spanish. He gives a somewhat full account of Feroese forms, the first of its kind, based on Svabo's ballad collection in manuscript. With regard to his Icelandic grammar it may be noted that he discovered and correctly explained *u*-umlaut (J. Grimm discussed Rask's theory and rejected it, but later accepted it [p. 14.]). His *Ret-skrivningslære* (1826, 16 + 339 pages) represents a broader and more thoroughgoing examination of the orthography of Danish than any published before or since (p. 52); Jespersen deals somewhat at length with its critical method and the wealth of ideas it contains, as, *e. g.*, on the relation between sounds and writing in general.

From all these studies there arose in his mind a clearer and clearer picture of a group of related languages and of the nature of that relationship at a time when no one else anywhere had understood it.¹ Already in the outline (1811) of the investigations which he submitted for the prize of the Scientific Society there are startling comparisons between Greek and Old Norse, the kinship of which languages he had seen as early as 1809. Although the

¹ Only Johan Ihre in Sweden is, in a measure, an exception to this.

prize was set for 1811, Rask was given more time for the completion of his studies; then in 1813 he entered upon his Icelandic journey; he remained in Iceland till 1815. His great work was sent down to Copenhagen in 1814. It is a regrettable fact that this work could not be printed at once; perhaps, if it had, Rask's name might have passed down in history as the founder of the science of comparative philology, even though it was published in a language that was not very widely known; but it could not be published until 1818, two years after Bopp's *Conjugationssystem* (p. 21).

Of Rask's great *Prisskrift* (dealt with pp. 21-25), I can only take the space to speak of a few points. Under principles of the study of comparative linguistics he points out the futility of the mere study of words, for words do not make a language except as they are combined with one another; it is form-changes, inflexions, structure, that must be studied. This is Rask's guiding principle, which he practices everywhere in his work.² He shows how certain groups of words within a language are of relatively less importance in determining relationship (words connected with art, public intercourse, commerce, etc.); most significant of all, however, are the pronouns and the numerals of a language. In connection with these and other things the author points out that Rask's methodology for comparative philology is not only without a parallel before his day but even for a long time after his day. The second part of Rask's work applies his principles to Icelandic and the languages that are most nearly related, the other Scandinavian languages, furthermore the "Saxon" languages (Frisian, Dutch, Low-German, Anglo-Saxon) and German; the whole family he calls "Gothic." In Part III he then seeks the source of the "Gothic" language. He first examines geographically contiguous languages; he quickly eliminates Basque, after a full examination also Finnish, correctly, but erroneously also Celtic (corrected 1818 in letter from St. Petersburg).³ In the same way, with correct conclusions, the Slavic, "Lettish-Lithuanian," Hindu and Iranian languages are examined (an important error in his system was corrected by himself not many years later).

² As Franz Bopp simultaneously (Jespersen, p. 22).

³ Definite proof of the position of Celtic in the family was first furnished by Pritchard, 1831 (p. 26, in Jespersen)

Rask's journey to Asia covered the years 1816-1823. In St. Petersburg he had the opportunity of studying the speech of two natives of the Aleutian Islands; his observations about it have recently been printed (1916) as a valuable contribution to the Esquimo languages; he begins now the intensive study of Sanskrit, and Old and New Persian; he purchases a mass of Old Persian and Indian manuscripts (now in the Royal Library, Copenhagen); visits Bombay, crosses all northern India to Calcutta, experiences numerous trials and discomforts, speaks often in letters of how helpful to him the English officials were, even to supplying him with needed funds; he is taken ill, goes through a terrible period of mental depression, suspicion that he is being pursued by enemies everywhere; regains his health somewhat, but is from now on a marked man; is all the time engaged with his researches in the languages modern and old, of India and Persia (Hindustani, Zend, Pehlevi, etc.). In December 1822 he embarked for home; on the journey he had his first and last love-affair says N. M. Petersen (the lady was, it seems, a fellow passenger from Altona, Germany); reads Madame de Staël's *Corinne* on the voyage and works on his theory of the French Verbs (a combination of activity for which Petersen is unable to excuse Rask); and in the summer of 1823 he disembarks again in his native Denmark.

Of his activity and his publications in subsequent years the author speaks pp. 45-80 (see also above on pp. 50-54); of his friendship with J. Grimm and the break with him, of his unhappiness and failing health. And to the last he worked with the same devotion to his investigations, where every new discovery made, every new fact learned, seemed to give him the deepest joy and the happiness which life itself did not vouchsafe him. Rask died Nov. 14, 1832.

Rask was the founder of the scientific study of Old Norse, of Danish, of Old English, and of Frisian (p. 62); in the field of the Baltic languages and in Zend Avestan his contributions are fundamental; and he did important work in the Romance languages, though not epochal in the same way here; and in several languages outside the Indo-European family his work was either fundamental (Finnish, Lappish) or of great importance (Esquimo, the Dravidian languages in Southern India, etc.). Jespersen speaks of Rask's influence on J. Grimm; and of Grimm's complete revision of the first volume of his *Deutsche Grammatik* (1822, 1st ed. 1819) after

he had read Rask's *Prisskrift* (ed. of 1819 has nothing about the sound-shift,—*Lautverschiebung*; in 1822 it is formulated in detail). He points out how the law had been discovered and clearly explained by Rask, and that it is not "Grimm's Law" but "Rask's Law"; in many other matters Rask was the teacher, but often the pupil carried farther the ideas of the teacher. The relation between Rask and Bopp is quite a different one; Rask's great work was finished in 1814, published in 1818. When Bopp's *Conjugations-system* was published, 1816, Rask had entered upon his Asiatic journey. Bopp's chief work *Vergleichende Grammatik* appeared in 1833 a year after Rask's death; in 1857 the second edition of the latter came out, wherein he accredits to Rask priority for the doctrine regarding the *Lautverschiebung* (which he before had attributed to Grimm), calling attention to the fact that it had been presented "kurz und bündig" by Rask before Grimm's *Grammatik*. The characterization and equipment of the three men and the real contributions of each are, it seems to me, correctly appraised by Jespersen (and Holger Pedersen) pages 64-77.

It was characteristic for Rask that he gave great emphasis to the modern languages and the periods immediately anterior to their modern phase. But in Germany linguistic and comparative research took a different direction. Today again Rask's "realistic" practice (equal attention to the living speech) has come to the fore (the Scandinavian countries, England, America). "No one believes now any longer that one necessarily imbibes comparative linguistic science by drinking deep drafts of Sanskrit." Jespersen sees in this modern tendency in our science, the passing of the dominance of the German school from Grimm and Bopp down, and the entrance upon a realistic era in the comparative study of languages. And of this it was Rasmus Rask who laid the foundations by the work for which he was awarded the prize of the Danish Scientific Society in 1818.

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